

# Pete Shelley

See also: The Buzzcocks, Zip.

- 1980               **SKY YEN (EP)**  
A1.Sky Yen Part 1   B1.Sky Yen Part 2
- (orig ep)       UK Groovy STP-2
- 1981.08       A1.HOMOSAPIEN   B1.Keats' Song  
7": UK Genetic WIP-6720 [ps]  
B1.Guess I Must Have Been in Love with Myself  
7": CAN Arista AS-0690  
1.Homosapien (Special Mix)   2.Yesterday's Not Here (Special Mix)   3.Witness the Change/I Don't Know What It Is (Extended Combo Version)  
12PRO: US Arista SP-133
- (1982)       A1.Homosapien   B1.Love in Vain  
7": UK Genetic WIP-6720, AUSL Island K-8479  
1.Homosapien (Dance Version)   2.Love in Vain   3.Homosapien (Elongated Dancepartydubmix)  
12: UK Genetic 12WIP-6720
- > Shelley's first legitimate post-Buzzcocks salvo was surprisingly soft club music that featured pumping synths, strummed guitars and Shelley's earnest if underwhelming voice. Edgy stuff at the time more for the implied subject matter than the music behind it. Although I never warmed to the idea of a Petey Shiny Synthi Shelley, it's not the radical departure it seems on the surface. Strip away the synthesizers, speed things up a little and you've got the makings of another buzzsaw Buzzcocks classic. The B side's even better ("Guess I Must Have Been In Love With Myself," a Buzzcocks title if ever there was). As for the lyrical meaning behind "Homosapiens," you'll find the answer (maybe) in Mick Sinclair's 1982 interview with Mr. Shelley. (<http://micksinclair.com/sounds/shelley.html>)
- 1981.11       A1.I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS  
2..Witness the Change   3.In Love with Somebody Else   4.Maxine  
2-7": UK Genetic UWIP-6740 [ps]
- 1981.12       **HOMOSAPIEN**                               **US.121**  
Produced by Martin Rushent and Pete Shelley
- (UK vers.)   1.Homosapien   2.Yesterday's Not Here   3.I Generate a Feeling   4.Keat's Song  
5.Qu'est-ce Que C'est Que Ca   6.I Don't Know What It Is   7.Guess I Must Have Been in Love with Myself   8.Pusher Man   9.Just One of Those Affairs   10.Its Hard Enough Knowing
- (US vers.)   A1.Homosapien   A2.Yesterday's Not Here   A3.Love in Vain   A4.Just One of Those Affairs   A5.Qu'est-ce Que C'est Que Ca   B1.I Don't Know What It Is   B2.Witness the Change   B3.Guess I Must Have Been in Love with Myself   B4.I Generate a Feeling   B5.In Love with Somebody Else
- (orig lp)   UK Genetic ILPS-9676, March 1982: US/CAN Arista AL-6602, AUSL Genetic L37706, GER/NET Island 204163 320
- (orig cs)   UK Genetic ITC-9676, US Arista ATC-6602
- (reiss cdx)  UK version w. bonus tracks: 11.Witness the Change   12.Maxine   13.In Love With Somebody Else   14.Homosapien (Dub)   15.Witness the Change/I Don't Know What Love Is (Dub)   16.Love in Vain  
April 4, 2006: US Universal 513310

**3 stars.** All right. Apparently Pete Shelley loves boys and synthesizers. All right. Let me just scratch The Buzzcocks off my Bands Most Likely to Take Over the World (BMLTOW) list... scratcha scratcha scratcha. Now, that leaves The Clash and Adam & The Ants. (Okay, so the list was doomed to failure from the get-go.) Pete Shelley, the heart and brain of The Buzzcocks, sacrificed both organs to the great god of technology and emerged as a club wunderkind with the single "Homosapiens" (which, from this point onward, I will not be touching with a ten-foot stick with doody on the end of it). Where The Buzzcocks were raw passion and emotion, the music on Homosapien is icy stuff: Gary Numan, Peter Schilling, pasty-faced Europeans who had graduated from street kidz to sartorial sophisticates. Underneath it all Shelley is still an ace songwriter, but you've got some digging to do before "Qu'est-ce Que C'est Que Ca," "Guess I Must Have Been In Love With Myself" and "I Generate A Feeling" generate any genuine warmth. (Imagine me kind of nodding my head and saying "I guess that sounds a little like Something's Gone Wrong Again." That's the most you can hope for after a few spins.) It is such a different chapter than The Buzzcocks that I'll warn fans of the one to steer clear of the other. However, I would say the same to Pistols fans about PiL, and there are records by Love and Rockets, Devo and Sparks

that would likewise leave original fans feeling cold. Punks are a mercurial lot by nature, and many of them took pains to embrace disco as if nothing could be more shocking. I suppose that's true, but I wish they could have agreed on just one of them to do it (say, Lydon), so that we could have been spared BAD's beatbox and Shelley's bloodless warbling.

- 1981 A1.WITNESS THE CHANGE B1.Witness the Change (Instrumental)  
7PRO: US Arista AS-0700
- 1983.02 A1.TELEPHONE OPERATOR B1.Many a Time **UK.66**  
7": UK Genetic XX1 [ps], US Arista AS1-9035, GER Island 105169-100 [ps]  
B1.Telephone Operator (Mono)  
7PRO: US Arista 9035  
2.Many a Time (Extended Dance Version) 3.Many a Telephone Operator (Scratch Banded)  
12: US Arista AD1-9025
- 1983.04 **XL-1** **UK.42** **US.151**  
Produced by Martin Rushent and Pete Shelley  
1.Telephone Operator 2.If You Ask Me (I Won't Say No) 3.What Was Heaven? 4.You Know Better Than I Know 5.Twilight 6.(Millions of People) No One Like You 7.Many a Time 8.I Just Wanna Touch 9.You and I 10.XL-1 11.ZX Spectrum Code  
(orig lp) UK Genetic XL-1, US/CAN Arista AL6-8017, GER Island 205.629.320  
(orig csx) w. bonus tracks: 11.Homospaien (Dub Mix) 12.Witness the Change (Dub Mix)  
UK Genetic XLC-1, US Arista AC6-8017

**3 stars.** Bringing guitars back into the mix, XL-1 comes closer to emulating Shelley's taut and edgy work with The Buzzcocks. Synthesizers still play a large part in the music, but marching right behind the alienated electronica are the pop/punk sensibilities that marked his previous band. Pete's voice really isn't as well suited to the club milieu, which requires a slower delivery that leaves him exposed on songs like "If You Ask Me (I Won't Say No)" and "Many A Time." But he's just as often charming in his humble, familiar way: e.g., "You And I," "You Know Better Than I Know," "I Just Wanna Touch." Although synthesizer sounds from the early '80s haven't aged especially well, this album fares better than most thanks to Shelley's forceful arrangements. The engine that drives songs like "Telephone Operator" and "What Was Heaven?" is ahead of its time, choosing effects that are moody and aggressive, elements which survived into the subsequent techno scene. It's unclear how influential this album might have been on later synth bands, but the mix of pop/punk/club/krautrock is pretty unique to Shelley (although Tony Banks' The Fugitive, released that same year, is strikingly similar in spots). The cassette adds dub mixes of "Homospaien" (now more affected than ever) and the instrumental "Witness The Change." This gets my nod for the best Pete Shelley album; it's cooking in a different kitchen than The Buzzcocks, but he's managed to spice up the synth sound nicely.

- 1983 A1.(MILLIONS OF PEOPLE) NO ONE LIKE YOU  
B1.If You Ask Me  
7: UK Genetic XS-2 [ps]  
B1.(Millions of People) No One Like You (Dub Mix)  
12: UK Genetic 12XS-2
- 1984.11 A1.NEVER AGAIN B1.III  
7: UK Immaculate IMMAC-1 [ps]  
2.Give It to Me 3.III (Extended)  
12: UK Immaculate 12IMMAC-1
- † Shelley, Gerard Cookson, John Doyle, Norman Fischer-Jones, Jim Gardner, Mark Sanderson.
- 1986.03 A1.WAITING FOR LOVE (Extended Version)  
B1.Waiting for Love (7" Version) B2.Designer Lamps  
12: UK Mercury MERX-215
- 1986 1.ON YOUR OWN (New York Remix) 2.On Your Own (New York Dub) 3.Please Forgive Me... But I Cannot Endure It Any Longer (Extended Version)  
12PRO: US Mercury 884 751
- 1986.06 **HEAVEN AND THE SEA**  
Produced by Stephen Hague  
A1.Waiting for Love A2.On Your Own A3.They're Coming for You A4.I Surrender  
A5.Life Without Reason A6.Need a Minit B1.Never Again B2.My Dreams B3.Blue Eyes  
B4.You Can't Take That Away B5.No Moon  
(orig lp) UK Mercury MERH-90, US Mercury 830 004

(reiss cdx) w. bonus tracks: 12.Designer Lamps 13.Please Forgive Me... For I Cannot Endure It  
Any Longer 14.Nelson's Riddle  
1992: GER Line 941817

**3 stars.** The story of the boy who went to sleep angry and woke up a machine. The seeds of dance dissent lay slumbering under the hard lacquered floor. The dancers had already let the lion (Pete Shelley) through the gate on the strength of "Homosapiens," thinking they could make a pet of him. They were wrong. Heaven And The Sea is a darker, crowded vision of synthesizer pop; not punk but not pretty either. Call it a slow march back to The Buzzcocks, as songs like "Never Again" and "My Dreams" suggest that band in a thoughtful mood. However, it's too synthetic and slow for punk, too talkative for club music, instead inhabiting some halfworld of atmospheric synthesizer pop and angst (right next door to Love And Rockets). I always had the feeling this music should have led to more, like a lush folk-punk movement or something, rather than a dead end. You can sense some of Shelley's frustration on the Chuang Tzu quote on the inner sleeve (translation: we music listeners love our leprous lot). But what kind of cure was Shelley selling on Heaven And The Sea? A palliative of punk and disco, which was plainly unpalatable to both camps. XL-1 was equally robotic, but the melodies were better. Heaven has some of the dramatic sameness that plagued the latter-day Ultravox albums: interesting but not instantly hummable. And so Shelley seems to have ended up on the alluvial edges with the other alternative heroes that arrived in the first wave (Adam Ant, Gary Numan, The Stranglers). Heaven And The Sea is still a good album; perhaps his most principled record to date. But it doesn't have a good gimmick ("Homosapien") or irresistible charm ("You Know Better Than I Know," "I Just Wanna Touch"). Fans will find this a quality release worth picking up, and by fans I mean stalwarts and not the people who get Pete Shelley and Peter Schilling confused.

1986.08 A1.BLUE EYES B1.Nelson's Riddle  
7": UK Mercury MER-225 [ps]  
A1.Blue Eyes (Extended Version) B1.Nelson's Riddle  
12: UK Mercury MERX-225

1986.11 A1.I SURRENDER B1.Need a Minit  
7": UK Mercury MER-234 [ps]

1989.04 A1.HOMOSAPIEN II B1.Homosapien II (Instrumental)  
7": UK Immaculate IMMAC-11  
A1.Homosapien II (Icon Mix) B1.Homosapien II (Techno Mix)  
12: UK Immaculate 12IMMAC-11  
2.Homosapien II (Icon Mix) 3.Homosapien II (Radio Mix) 4.Homosapien II (Shower  
Mix)  
CDS: UK Immaculate IMMAC-11CD

2001.11.07 **TELEPHONE OPERATOR: THE BEST OF PETE SHELLEY**  
1.Telephone Operator 2.(Millions of People) No One Like You 3.Homosapien 4.Many  
a Time 5.XL-1 6.Maxine 7.If You Ask Me (I Won't Say No) 8.Qu'est-ce Que C'est  
Que Ca 9.Yesterday's Not Here 10.I Don't Know What It Is 11.I Generate a  
Feeling 12.What Do I Get 13.Ever Fallen in Love 14.Everybody's Happy Nowadays  
15.Telephone Operator/Many a Time (Dub) 16.Telephone Operator (Tony Castle Mobile  
Mix)

(orig cd) JPN EMI/Toshiba TOCP-64147